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How educare integrates into the round-the-clock early childhood education and care?

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In current Finnish society there is an increasing number of parents working during irregular working hours as nonstandard shift workers, meanwhile, Finnish family types are becoming more diverse than before. This will bring new challenges and pressure in the flexibility of Finnish early childhood education and care (ECEC) system. ECEC is usually implemented in daytime but many families need these services also in the evenings, nights and weekends. However, the area of round-the-clock ECEC is not widely studied and needs more attention because of its special nature. This thesis aims to discuss how to integrate the principles and objectives of Finnish ECEC into the round-the-clock early childhood education and care. The qualitative study was implemented by interviewing ECEC personnel and guardians, observing the current circumstances about children's learning and development in a Finnish round-the-clock daycare center and analyzing the data and sources about relevant topics from documents, websites, government policy records, leaflets and meeting minutes. The solutions highlight the suggestions to Finnish authorities, ECEC service providers, ECEC professions and Children's parents that the round-the-clock early childhood education and care must have the same high quality ECEC services with standard day care centers by integrating care, education and instruction as a whole, which is referred as the educare model. ECEC services must be better shaped to meet the multiple care and educational needs. ECEC personnel must obtain professional qualification and get continuing education to better support the children and their families. Learning in the mixed-age groups could be implemented systematically for the potential benefits by qualified ECEC educators. ECEC personnel would consider parents as ECEC pedagogical partner by more sharing their thoughts and practices with parents and involving parents more deeply regarding to their child's caring and education.

Keywords: educare, early childhood education and care, round-the-clock daycare, ecec quality, mixed age groups

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

With an increasing number of parents working on nonstandard working shifts and more diverse family types in Finnish society, nonstandard hours childcare becomes more and more important. Nonstandard hours childcare is becoming important and demanding which requires more round-the-clock childcare operations now. It is generally accepted that most regulated daycare center operates on a 'standard' work day basis (i.e., 6:15 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.). Childcare options for parents who work on nonstandard shifts (evening, overnight or weekend shifts) are limited in Finland. Canadian research indicates that standard daycare operating times do not meet their needs of working evenings or overnight shifts, or other nonstandard working schedules (Halfon & Friendly 2015).

In Finland, public investment in Early Childhood Education and Care (short for "ECEC") is much greater in day care sector rather than other social sectors. During my studying in social service periods, I had the good chances to visit some standard daycare centers in southern of Finland. The good impression to me would be: good interaction between personnel and small children, small size group of young children, good quality of play and pedagogical activities as well as short but enough working shifts. However, the situations in round-the-clock daycare are invariably alternated based on my observation during my last placement in one round-the-clock daycare. In round-the-clock daycare, young children come and stay in daycare for all day long and staffs keep changes on different working shifts (evening, overnight or weekends shifts). The planned working schedules determine which staff would be on duty during the specific time period. It is also common to mix different age groups of children together for the economic reasons. Regardless of different forms among ECEC services, all ECEC providers must comply with quality measures, including the national core curriculum, staff-to-child ratios, professional qualifications as well as pedagogical structures etc.

According to Finnish national curriculum for early childhood education and care (hereinafter referred as FNAE) (2018, 23) Finnish ECEC is an integrated and coherent entity in which care, education and instruction are inseparable but closely associated in practical operations. The mission of ECEC is to promote children's holistic growth, development and equity among children and prevents their social exclusion (FNAE 2018, 14). The ECEC curriculum directs Finnish ECEC (educare model) in much details. The municipalities have the statutory obligation to provide nonstandard childcare as the form of round-the-clock daycare to meet the extended needs. However, it is little to talk about round-the-clock childcare (also called 'nonstandard

hours childcare'). The educare model in round-the-clock daycare need more investigation and research.

1.2 Objectives of the thesis

The purpose of the thesis is to investigate and develop how to best integrate the entity of education, instruction and care, so called educare model in the round-the-clock ECEC (nonstandard hour childcare) in Finland. This thesis aims to describe the existing environment and services provided to young children in round-the-clock daycare settings and to recommend on best utilization the resources to best benefit children and families who need nonstandard hour childcare.

Finnish ECEC curriculum emphasizes participation of children and guardians as one of the key factors in high quality ECEC (FNAE 2018, 31). Undoubtedly, participation in early childhood education and care have positive impacts on children's early learning and development and consecutive outcomes, such as academic performance, labor market success and future financial mobility (Taguma, Litjens and Makowiecki 2012). However, these benefits of early childhood education and care on children's outcomes, depend on the quality of the various forms of ECEC services. This thesis provides an opportunity for children under round-the-clock daycare to voice out their feelings. The views and feedbacks of children's parents who choose nonstandard hours childcare and nonstandard hours childcare personnel should be heard as well. The research is conducted through qualitative research methods: interviews, observations and documentary analysis. There are five participants in total (including parents and personnel) taking part in the research.

The theoretical review includes a review of related research literature and policies on Finnish early childhood education and care, Finnish national core curriculum for early childhood education and care, various forms of early childhood education and care services, qualification requirements on ECEC professions. In addition, there is an extended review of attachment theory and mixed-age grouping learning method based on the documentary analysis and observation during the practice. The theories closely associated with this research support the data and information obtained from active observation and interview in the research process.

During the research process, the main challenges, difficulties, opportunities and issues in the context of Finnish round-the-clock childcare were identified. The thesis contains theoretical and practical information about whether the existing round-the clock daycare and its environment affect small children in negative ways or not. Because the goal of Finnish ECEC is to create equal provisions for the holistic growth, development and learning, round-the-clock daycare should keep the same quality with standard daycare in Finland. Based on the identified problems and issues, this thesis makes some recommendations and solutions to Finnish authorities, ECEC personnel and parents to provide high quality and affordable nonstandard

hours childcare to children and their families. All ECEC settings and programs which have a high level of quality are undoubtedly connected with small children's growth and development, with children substantially favoring from high quality services.

2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Finnish educare model

Finnish ECEC is an extensive and collaborative system which integrates care, education and instruction as a whole to guide early childhood education and care in Finland (FNAE 2018, 23). Finnish ECEC curriculum and act on ECEC (FNAE 2018, 14) underlines the well-being, development and learning of children. One key element in Finnish high quality ECEC system is the educare model, which combines care, education and instruction with a pedagogical emphasis. As early childhood is a comprehensive stage of development and learning in the life, the central aim of Finnish educare model embraces children's holistic growth, development and learning as well as collaboration with their guardians (Finnish National Agency for Education 2022). The Finnish ECEC system plays especial emphasis on the equal opportunities to every child, regardless their family background and economic status (FNAE 2018, 21). It targets to help at-risk children and their families conquer the difficulties and crisis. Care, education and instruction have different focuses in children's activities and services based on the different ages of children.

Care in educare model means caring for children's basic physical and emotions (FNAE 2018, 23). Children have their fundamental rights to be cared properly and they have many needs which are different from adults. Children are developing and changing continuously and their physical needs are always changing to seek a healthy and comfortable life experiences. The common physical needs of children (What Every Child Needs n.d.) include nutritious foodstuff, clean water and fresh air, warmth and clothing, protected environment, safe place to play, enough sleep, appropriate freedom and exercise etc. Besides, children also have their emotional needs, such as love, caring, encouraging, kind attention from their caregivers, feeling of secure as well as opportunities to express themselves (What Every Child Needs n.d.). These emotional needs contribute to children's mental health. Undoubtedly, every child has unique needs because they're all unique and different. In my opinion regarding to educare model, ECEC educators need to meet children's both physical needs and emotional needs in differing ways that best suit children.

If children receive quality child care during their early years, they are more likely to develop their better social and learning skills (Taguma, Litjens and Makowiecki 2012). The quality child care also means providing a permanent, safe and family-liked residential care environment to

children, which is the vital part of child care. ‘Family’ means safe and love. Everyone prefers to live with their parents at home for love and attention. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states that the child should grow up in a family environment with happiness, love and understanding (UN 1989). When children are cared in daycare (not by parents at home), the day care should be a permanent, safe and family-liked place (Family for Every Child 2013b; UN 2010a). Children with poor care are amongst the most vulnerable people in the world (Csaky 2011). Children without quality care may limit their physical, language and intelligence development.

Education in educare model means the activities of transmission of cultural heritage, values and traditions to help communicate, shape and update cultural values, customs and norms (FNAE 2018, 23). Children deserve an opportunity to participate in a quality education during their early years. A good education in educare model must guide the children to form their own opinions, think critically and behave in a properly sustainable way (FNAE 2018, 23). Education enables the children to engage with peers as well as the world around them. Education is systematically organized not only for preschool education at age of six, but covering the whole period of early childhood.

The current society is becoming more and more complex; hence, formal education must derive more efficient way of cultural transmission with qualified ECEC teachers and caregivers. The higher qualifications of teachers or caregivers are significantly positively correlated to overall higher quality early childhood education and care (Manning, Wong, Fleming and Garvis 2019). The researcher found that ECEC teachers with high-quality ECEC trainings have more interactions with the children compared with those ECEC personnel who lacked specific ECEC relevant trainings (Burchinal, Cryer, Clifford and Howes 2010). Likewise, ECEC teachers with higher qualification are more using positive and less punitive way to educate children, and under this style education, children present better social and cognitive capabilities compared with children under more authoritarian style of interaction (Arnett 1987).

Instruction refers to the specific teaching methods by ECEC teachers, various ECEC pedagogical activities and transversal competences (FNAE 2018, 23). The terms of ‘teaching’ and ‘instruction’ are often used interchangeably (Kridel 2010). In general, instruction can provide a language/literacy rich environment and freedom to explore in natural surroundings. Instructional activities (e.g., language, mathematics etc.) are based on ideologies which are implemented equally in ECEC. The instructions are provided through the interaction between ECEC teachers and children based on children’s current knowledges, scaffolding capabilities, interests, strengths and needs (West, Swanson and Lipscomb n.d.). Effective instructions must ‘support and utilize children’s natural curiosity and desire to experiment’ (FNAE 2018, 23). With appropriate level of sensitivity and responsiveness, ECEC teachers must intentionally teach and instruct children based on goals setting and teaching curriculum.

Instruction is different from teaching which transmit all things like concepts, ideas, theories etc. to children. Instruction utilizes different strategies, tools or tasks to support and allow children's learning and exploration by themselves (Gulzar 2021). Encouraging and feedback are also essential parts of instruction provided by ECEC teachers to support children in their own learning process and experiences. Finnish ECEC instruction is a child-centered model where ECEC teachers instruct children how to think and learn by promoting higher-order thinking skills such as reasoning, integration and hypothesis etc. Instruction put an emphasis on Finnish pedagogical activities based on children's best interests and previous experiences (FNAE 2018, 23). Children takes an active agency role in their planning, implementing and evaluation process. Every child has an individual ECEC plan that is actually an individual pedagogical plan to implemented and evaluated regularly (FNAE 2018, 40).

2.2 Forms of Early Childhood Education and Care Services in Finland

The Act on Early Childhood Education and Care and the National core curriculum for early childhood education and care steer all forms of ECEC services (FNAE 2018, 17). In current Finnish society, more and more parents are employed in the labor market with nonstandard working shifts. Besides, due to social changes, the family types and proportion in Finland nowadays are diverse and varied, including married or cohabiting couples with children, a mother with children and a father with children according to Statistics of Finland. In addition, more and more women are employed in the labor market and work away from home. Due to the above structural changes in Finnish society, the forms of a day-care center became more diverse in order to meet the different requirements from different employment status and family types.

In Finland, all children under school age have an unconditional right to ECEC services provided by local authority (Act on ECEC 540/2018). The parents still in parental leave are entitled to use the free daycare centers in Finland. ECEC services are also open to foreigners even just moved in Finland. The forms of ECEC services (Figure 1) include ECEC daycare centers, family or group-based daycares as well as open daycares. Pre-primary is also part of Finnish ECEC services. The Act on ECEC and the National core curriculum for ECEC govern all forms of ECEC services. Different forms of ECEC services have different characteristics on learning environments, resources, requirements of ECEC personnel, structures and size etc. (FNAE 2018, 18). Parents have the freedom to choose the form of ECEC services based on the availability of a ECEC services and their specific needs (What is ECEC, n.d.).

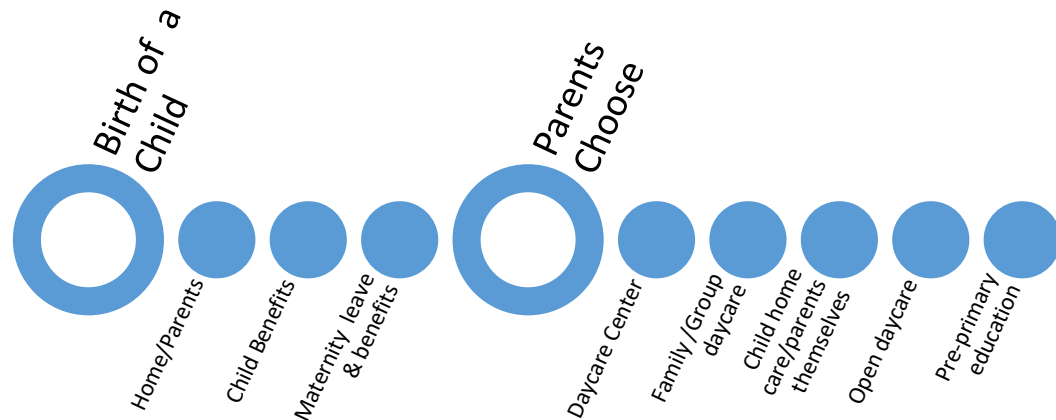


Figure 1 Forms of ECEC Services
(Early Childhood Education and Care in Finland 2004)

The daycare center (both private and public) is the most common form of Finnish ECEC services. The Act on Children’s Day Care requires center-based ECEC services to collaborate with parents to raise their kids and promote children’s holistic growth, learning and development (FNAE 2018, 14). The size of daycare center may differ from several to hundreds of children. Usually, the children are grouped into groups based on their age range, such as 0-3-year-olds and 3-6-year-olds. Besides, sibling groups still exist regardless of ages. Most of daycare centers generally operate during standard daytime on working days because most of children spend the daytime in care on weekdays. Some nonstandard hours children care, for example the round-the-clock daycare centers operate in evening, overnight and/or 24-hours because some children still need the care for various parental reasons. The demand of round-the-clock care is proved to continuously increase in current years. Staying in standard daycare centers children are cared for and provided nourishing breakfast, lunch and afternoon snack. Staying in the round-the-clock care (nonstandard hours childcare), dinner and evening snack is offered to children as well (ECEC Policy in Finland 2000).

Family/group family-based daycare (both private and public) is a good option to the youngest children / toddlers due to a small group and in caregiver’s home environment. Family-based day care is presented with demanding expectations in terms of care in general. According to early childhood education of City of Helsinki, the ceiling of group size is four toddlers; the caring hours can be flexible based on the agreement between the guardians and care providers; group family day care is provided by two or three family child careers; the maximum group size

is eight children in full-time and added two pre-school children or school children in part-time; the daycare centers and family-based daycare will be the backup in the situation of caregiver's absence (ECEC in family daycare n.d.). The care service provided in group family day care requires more flexibility and collaboration.

Open daycare centers are suitable for these parents or child-care minders who stay at home and take care of children under school-age. The open daycare centers also offer the services to foreigners to help them integrate into Finnish lives. According to Local Online Magazine for International People, everyone can visit the open daycare centers to participate in the various activities along with the kids; there are various services and activities offered including useful books and toys, arts related activities (e.g., singing, dancing, playing music and crafts etc.), seminar related to children's growth and development, picnic and outing etc.; all open daycare center activities are open to everyone and free-of charge (Foreigners in Finland n.d.). Open daycare centers provide excellent social networks for parents and child-care minders caring to discuss children raising issues and get support from each other.

Pre-primary education (esiopetus) is one part of Finnish ECEC service that every child at six must attend before attending the compulsory education in the future. According to City of Helsinki, the pre-primary education is often conducted in daycare centers or schools lasting for 4 hours per day; children usually learn the knowledge of mathematics, arts, nature and culture etc. through playing activities; if a child's native language is not Finnish or Swedish, they will study Finnish or Swedish as a foreign language; Besides, the native language, religion and ethics of the child are respected and studied during pre-primary education days (Pre-primary education n.d.).

2.3 Early Emotional Bonds - The Importance of Attachment

"An attachment" is an emotional bond between people which was described by the first attachment theorist John Bowlby as a "lasting psychological connectedness between human beings" as a result of their interactions (Bowlby 1997). Attachment theory particularly emphasizes "the long-term relationships and bonds between humans, including those between an adult and a child" (Cherry 2022). The early attachment explains that parents/caregivers allow the child to promote a sense of security and confidence to explore the world through providing comfort and response to the child's needs. Bowlby (1969) thought, if children who retain closeness to early attachment are more prone to obtain comfort and protection, they would be more likely to survive (McLeod 2022). Bowlby and others also considered early attachment as a kind of natural selection through the process of developed attachment with the essential drives including nurturance and responsiveness (Cherry 2022).

Attachment theory does not mean that mothers should not work outside from the home. But small children leaving mother during the period of mother's going out for work need much more

good caring by other daily and dependable caregivers. And the daily caregiver needs regularity, in other words, it must be the same caregiver (e.g., a nannie) who cares for the small child. It would be an upset for a young child if the caregivers are always changing. The length of 'continuous lasting period' depends on the age of the young child, the relationship with the attachment figure, the frequency of leaving, and also the child's personalities.

Attachment plays an important role in early childhood education and care settings because it shapes the basis of social relationships that starts from infancy (Karakas & Dağlı 2019). It has been clearly discovered by recent research that healthy attachments have crucial impact on children's later academical results (Ekeh 2012). It is vital for ECEC personnel to learn the attachment theory in depth and understand the impact of their own interactions built up towards children in order to provide positive and safe environment for children.

There are four different patterns of attachment developed in early childhood. The primary caregivers of children contribute to the style of attachment during a child's formative years and the attachment styles have enormous impact on behaviors throughout later life (Cherry 2022). Insecure attachment styles are always associated to childhood trauma, inappropriate attuned, or substance abuse which would have severely negative impact on children's mental health, social interaction and capabilities in building stable and long-lasting psychological relationships in later adulthood (Lahousen, Unterrainer and Kapfhammer 2019). On the contrary, children with secure attachment style will benefit in many ways: more happiness and less anger, stable and lasting relationships, capabilities of solving problems on their own and more confidence etc.

The first style of attachment is called as Ambivalent / anxiety attachment. It is an unusual style of attachment. Most often, anxious attachment is due to mis-attuned and inconsistent parenting (Anxious Attachment 2020). For instance, a child can't obtain sufficient dependence and affection from his / her primary caregivers when they need them. It would be particularly reflected in childhood that the child will become very anxious when his / her caregiver leaves. Even the adults with ambivalent / anxiety attachment style are always anxiously looking for the appreciation, attention and caring from their partners (Anxious Attachment 2020). They have an inherent panic of abandonment with very negative self-image and high level of insecurity (Lahousen, Unterrainer and Kapfhammer 2019).

The second style of attachment is Avoidant / Dismissive attachment. The children with an avoidance / dismissive attachment generally escape from the closeness with their parents or caregivers (Nguyen 2022). The avoidant / dismissive attachment style is possibly caused by some rude or uncaring behaviors of caregivers. Hence, children refuse to seek support from their caregivers and avoid emotional closeness with caregivers. The adults with avoidant /

dismissive attachment style are usually very independent and self-esteemed, but they do not trust on any social relationships and prefer to leave lonely.

The third style of attachment is considered as disorganized or fearful-avoidant attachment. The child with disorganized attachment (which is the most difficult type of insecure attachments) act as a combination of both anxious and avoidant behaviors (Disorganized Attachment 2022). It is a kind of disconcerting and confusion behavior as the child might have no obvious attachments. This insecure pattern of attachment is caused by inconsistent adults' behaviors usually involving abuse and fear (Children's Attachment 2015). The adults with disorganized attachment generally have much barriers of relationships with others because they mistrust others and also fear sharing their internal feelings with others (Levy 2017).

The fourth style of attachment is Secure Attachment that is most common and healthy attachment style (Cherry 2022). Children need a secure attachment because they are generally able to be comforted by their their caregivers and feel assured, warm and reliable when difficulties come (Children's Attachment 2015). Children show stable and close connection to their caregivers, i.e., distress when separated and joy when reunited. Although the child may be upset sometimes, they feel assured that caregivers will come back to comfort them when necessary (Cherry 2022). Compared with other three insecure attachment styles as above, a secure attachment is related to less anxiety, avoidance and fear, hence secure attachment is proved to be the best attachment style.

2.4 Professional Qualification of ECEC Profession

Professional qualifications in ECEC prove the recognized level of education, knowledge and skills which ECEC professions have received. Current society changes have questioned traditional beliefs on early childhood education and care. The educated and well-trained ECEC professionals can provide high quality ECEC services and outcomes for children (OECD 2006). The initial education and continuous trainings can influence the quality of services and outcomes to young children by courses arranged and knowledge organized.

The qualified ECEC professionals can create high-quality pedagogic environment that makes the difference (Elliott, 2006; Sheridan 2009). The competent ECEC professionals have better understanding in children's learning and development. They know how to develop children's views and ideas through the knowledge and skills. They know how to interact with and between children in professional ways. It was proved that high-quality pedagogy is developed by better qualified ECEC professionals and better pedagogy result in better learning outcomes (Litjens & Taguma 2010).

The relevant studies have clearly indicated that ECEC teachers with bachelor's degrees were the most effective practitioners (OECD 2006). The well-education and well-trained ECEC

professionals can achieve high-quality ECEC with most favorable cognitive and social development for children (OECD 2006). However, the specialized education and training must be high quality and continuous, otherwise the effectiveness cannot be guaranteed. Besides, it is not necessary that all ECEC professions have high levels of education (OECD 2019). The studies found that lower-qualified ECEC professionals (like childcarers) will be positively influenced by working alongside highly trained professionals (ECEC teachers) (Sammons 2010). It is essential that ECEC professionals must stay updated on professional development, i.e., the ongoing education and training should be provided regularly and continuously.

In Finland, the eligibility of ECEC profession need a recognition from the Finnish National Agency for Education based on the Act on early childhood education and care (540/2018). Finnish ECEC professions (Table 1) include: (1) ECEC teachers; (2) ECEC Social pedagogies; (3) ECEC Childcarers; (4) Special education; (5) ECEC Heads of early education centers. However, some ECEC education is not required for a profession under the Act on Early Childhood education and care, for example family daycare personnel.

Table 1 Qualification Requirements on ECEC Professions
(Recognition of early childhood education and care qualifications n.d.)

ECEC Professions	Qualification Requirements
ECEC teachers	Bachelor's degree in education, and At least 60 credits of studies providing professional competences in early childhood education and care
ECEC Social Pedagogies	Bachelor's degree in social services and health care at a university of applied sciences, and At least 60 credits of studies providing professional competences in early childhood education and social pedagogy
ECEC Childcarers	Vocational Qualification in Education and Guidance, or a Vocational Qualification in Social and Health Care or other equivalent qualification, and sufficient amount of training in the care, upbringing and education of children
ECEC special education teachers	a qualification of teacher in early childhood education and care studies providing professional competences for special needs education, or a master's degree in education majoring in special education
ECEC Heads of early education center	a qualification of teacher in early childhood education and care

	<p>a Master's degree in education</p> <p>Sufficient management skills</p>
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2.5 Mixed-Age Grouping Learning Theory in Early Childhood Education and Care

Mixed-age grouping is placing children with different ages into the same groups. It is not a new thing in practice. It has been used in Montessori classes for a long history. Montessori's philosophy indicates that children can learn in different ways in mix-group learning (Disney 2020). Mixed-age grouping learning is not randomly arranged merely for economic reasons. In fact, mixed-age grouping learning is a rational and systematic teaching strategy. The assumption is that the mixed-age groups contain greater diversity of capabilities for children to learn from each other:

Mix-age grouping teaching and learning has some considerable advantages.

Firstly, in mixed-age grouping, ECEC educators may realize that it is important to differentiate the teaching method for a particular child. It is obvious that it is not workable to teach all children utilizing the same teaching methods and curriculum. ECEC teachers in the different age formations implement the more structured and planned curriculum in different ways (Magnusson & Bäckman 2022).

Secondly, mixed-age grouping involves more children's participation with less competition and stress. The activities during mixed-age grouping need more collaboration. Children are more likely to cooperate than compete in a multi-age classroom (Raghuram n.d.). And such interactions with younger peers can improve children's motivation and self-confidence (Kim 1990).

Thirdly, Mixed-age grouping provide a friendly and cooperative social environment in which both older children and younger children benefit from each other. A child's age is not always an accurate measure of his social and emotional development (Raghuram n.d.). In mixed-age group, the older children can present their leadership skills which is recognized as one of the social skills involved in improving general ability to develop social relationships (Katz, Evangelou and Hartman 1989-90). Mixed-age grouping would enhance younger children's social participation when interacting with older ones in more complex social pretend play for example.

Fourthly, mixed-age grouping created in ECEC setting is similar to home-like environment where younger children would be more accustomed to daycare centers. Meanwhile, as usually young children would be more likely to accept some isolated older children to practice social skills, the children who have social crisis may benefit from cross-age interaction in a family-

like settings. In fact, the lack of leadership skills may be a cause of social isolation (Furman, Rahe and Hartup 1979).

Fifthly, mixed-age interaction offers effective cognitive bases, including collaboration, communication and learning strategies. Cross-age grouping learning can offer children an effective Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which is one of key constructs in Lev Vygotsky's theory about learning and development. The Zone of Proximal Development is also defined as "the space between what a learner can do without assistance and what a learner can do with adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Billings & Walqui, n.d.). Children of similar ages are likely to be operating within one another's proximal zones of development (Slavin 1987).

Lastly but not least, as mixed-age groups involve "novices" and "experts" assisted by ECEC educators, they collaborate and communicate to each other by encouraging learning and interaction and contributing in their cognitive development. This learning and interaction approach may include peer tutoring and cooperative learning. Peer tutoring just follows the human being's natural tendency to interact with and learn from those who are older and more knowledgeable (Lippitt 1976). The children's motivation is increased when working in cooperative learning groups and that can improve the quality and equality in relationships and achievement in education (Nicholls 1979).

3 Functional thesis

This thesis is focusing on investigating how to best integrate the entity of education, instruction and care in the round-the-clock daycare and the aim is to discuss how to integrate the entity of education, instruction and care in the round-the-clock ECEC in Finland. Next, I will first present my working life partner and then the research methods I used. In the end of this chapter also ethical consideration will be presented.

3.1 Working life partner

The working life partner is a large public round-the-clock daycare center operating in Finland. This daycare is one of 24-hour daycare centers, providing early childhood education and care for 1-6-year-olds. It is located in the safe residential areas connected with convenient transportation. It has five children's groups with hundreds of children in the center. Its home-like facilities are very nice, especially including home-like sauna sections, big kitchen rooms, bright indoor gyms room, beautiful lofts and rocks behind the window. The main advantage of this daycare is providing nonstandard hours care, like evening care, overnight care and /or 24-hours care. The staffs are planned into different working shifts based on pre-planned

scheduling. The shift changes are quite common but critical because this daycare provides flexible hours services in this daycare center.

My final placement is in this daycare during the spring of year 2022. I feel honored to have an opportunity to walk closer to those children during my evening shifts and weekends dayshifts. It is no surprise that the children don't have to be grouped by their age, especially in the period of evening care, overnight care and weekend care. The ages of children range from only one-year-olds to pre-primary children. Most children need nonstandard hours care mainly due to the nonstandard working shifts of parents, or single parents or immigrant families. Among them, there is one child requires special support for her development and learning. When I looked into those children's eyes, I immediately understand their vulnerability and desire. I believe that these children under nonstandard hours care are more vulnerable than the children under standard daycare centers. Perhaps, the nonstandard hours care may result in more stress of children due to facing fluctuated settings, non-fixed caregivers and different sleeping schedules every day. Usually, a consistent and stable routine is better for children; the instability probably negatively impacts children's well-being and development (Sandstrom & Huerta 2013).

The staffs in this daycare center include the director of daycare center, ECEC teachers, social pedagogies and childcarers. Some of them are full-time staffs and some are substitutes or part-time staffs. The director and many staffs provided me much advice and useful information about ECEC operations and my intern role in this daycare. Among my continuous four months placement period, I tried to insist on every Monday evening shifts and Saturday dayshifts. Every week I've met almost different staffs due to the shifts and personnel changes. The staffs (especially these experienced regular staffs) have the good sensitivity to meet the children in different emotional states. I was impressed by their unhurried attitudes to serve for children and families. They tried to create a home-like atmosphere for children. Every breakfast, lunch, afternoon snack, dinner and evening snack are well served for children. They often accompanied children to watch TVs and performed pretend play with young children. They also arranged some pedagogical activities even during evening shifts, for example evening storytelling, handmade activities etc.

3.2 Research Methods

This thesis is aiming to identify the best integration of educare model into a Finnish round-the-clock daycare center. Usually, both quantitative data and qualitative data need to be collected. However, due to the privacy protection and relevant ethics considerations, I mainly utilized qualitative methodologies, including Observation, Interview and Document analysis to make this research.

Observation is a common research method in social sciences (Ciesielska, Wolanik Bostriöm & Öhlander 2018, 33). It is one of suitable methods for me to understand the current

circumstances about children's learning and development in a Finnish round-the-clock daycare center. Observation is a straightforward and flexible method which assists me to actively observe the existing situations, assess and figure out conclusions in this daycare center. However, it is quite time-consuming and tiring to collect the sufficient information, as I tried to fully adapt to the circumstances and thus had no control on the results of events. I spent around 10 weeks to closely interact with children, daycare personnel as well as guardians of children. I tried to understand what the events mean and then write down the important notes for completing the research. Director also gave me much advice on how to observe children during the placement. Every week, I also shared my accompanying children's moments (diaries, pictures etc.) with director and staffs. I always actively seek the advice from staffs and director and keep communication with them.

Interview is another valuable research method used for this thesis. I adopted casual interviews to ask a set of questions to ECEC personnel, children and parents when necessary. Compared with a structured interview, a casual interview is to ask both a few prearranged questions and some nonplanned questions. I prefer to a casual interviewing but not a strict structured interview in order to avoid some limitations in scope. I prepared and conducted a casual interview, and then compared and analyzed responses between interviewees. I targeted to reflect the truth and mitigate biases. This flexibility of casual interviewing supports me to gather more sufficient and detailed information on the topics and achieve more detailed conclusions. However, the interviewing method is difficult to conduct in proper way. I have to do sufficient preparation beforehand. It is essential to ask the right and appropriate questions during the interview.

Documentary analysis is also mainly used in this thesis. Documentary analysis is a social research method and is an important tool combined with other methodologies to provide a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility (Bowen 2009). I reviewed data and sources about the relevant topics from written documents, websites, government policy records, leaflets and meeting minutes etc. I also assessed the subjectivity and completeness of documents and recording. I consider documentary analysis as an efficient way to collect practical data and resources because they have easier accessibility and reliability. It saved much time for me as well.

3.3 Ethical Considerations

It is crucial to have ethical considerations before performing any research. Both the RCR guidelines (Guidelines for the responsible conduct of research and for handling allegations of misconduct) and Laurea professional ethics regulations (Laurea 2022) must be fully compliant with. The RCR guidelines published in year 2012 by Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity apply to all academic disciplines in Finland. The aim of the RCR guidelines is to prevent

misconduct in research work for all organizations, including universities, research institutes and universities of applied sciences (Tenk 2012). The violation of the RCR is divided into two categories: Research misconduct & Disregard for the RCR. The behaviors of research misconduct include Fabrication, Falsification or Misrepresentation, Plagiarism or Unacknowledged borrowing and Misappropriation (Tenk 2012). In other words, the RCR guidelines emphasizes the importance of honesty and integrity in all research.

The individual researcher must comply with the principles of the responsible conduct of research. He/she takes the due account for the research work, including respecting others' views and acknowledging appropriately, acquiring informed consent as well as protecting anonymity and confidentiality.

Respect others' views and acknowledge them: It is the most important ethical consideration for an individual researcher. I understand that I need to be adept at the related methods for this research and comply with professional ethics guidelines. It's not allowed to report any invented observation in research report; It's not allowed to modify, present and distort any original observations deliberately to distort in research report; it's not allowed to represent another person's material as my own without appropriate references; It's not allowed to unlawfully present another person's results, idea, plan, observation or data in my own research. Any failure to acknowledge others' views and ideas in own research report is considered as an act of plagiarism (Tenk 2012).

Acquire informed consent: This thesis project participants include daycare two ECEC personnel and three children's parents. The participants in this research work were informed about the research process, methodology and the role of the participant in the research work. Every participant has the right to decide whether he/she wants to participate or not. Before obtaining the research permit, I initially communicated with the director of working life partner for the purpose of thesis project, the theoretical framework, research methodology and the actions to be taken. Then I started to apply for the research permit from Finnish Growth and Learning Department for Research Permit. Only after I obtained an official consent statement - the research permit in March of 2021, I started the relevant research steps according to research objectives. This ethical consideration is mainly to protect the participants to avoid involved in poor research practice.

Protect anonymity and confidentiality: It is my duty to protect the anonymity and confidentiality about all participants in this research throughout the research process. All participants involved in this research in anonymous manner. Any identity and personal data never appear in this thesis at all. The name of the working partner is only disclosed in this thesis as a 'round-the-clock daycare center'. During the research, I have a locked box to keep the guardian's permissions and other paper materials. My computer is protected with a

password, and I won't restore any digital material to digital cloud storage, but only stored in my local computer. The digital files will be destroyed from the computer and the paper material (the permissions and notes) will be shredded after the thesis has been evaluated. The materials were used only between April 2022 and September 2022. After that period, all identification information and materials will be destroyed except for research permit issued by local authority.

4 Implementation

4.1 Interview & Observation

The research data collected for this project are from casual interviews, observation and documentary analysis. In fact, observation and interview are inseparable. For interview only, I prefer the method of casual interview due to its flexibility of follow-up on responses and further investigation with participants. A casual interview is conducted between a structured interview and a free-flowing interview. Interview is a useful method to collect the source of information from the targeted people about their knowledge, attitudes, opinions, feelings about the specific topics. It helps me to understand better on the circumstances and direct me to make further exploration on certain subjects. I used the way of face-to-face interview when I met these participants in daycare environment that is a suitable place to conduct the research steps.

Interview process is a little complex as it involved several steps. Firstly, I designed some pre-determined interview questions based on the information what I wanted to obtain from interviews. Evidently some questions are applicable to all participants, while some questions are typically designed for the targeted participants. In addition, I also considered that some information about my research topic is better to be developed in-depth. Secondly, I started to develop a one-to-one interview model. I introduced myself to each participant and explained the purpose of interview. I tried to arrange the questions in a proper order and ensure all questions are clear and easy to understand so that each interviewee can clearly answer the questions. Thirdly, I planned the interview logistics. Usually, I chose children's nap time or coffee break period to interview ECEC personnel as they would feel more relaxed. I interviewed guardians when they came to pick up their kids during my evening shifts. In a natural status, I did not bring any notetaker or recorder. I tried to build up an ease atmosphere to conduct a casual interview and each interview lasts around 15 minutes (10 minutes for answering planned questions, the rest of 5 minutes just for free chatting but still around the research topics). I also mentioned terms of confidentiality and anonymity in advance. All participants were relaxed and happy during casual interviews.

Observation can be merely looking or talking to people and then gain the information and insights from their body language or tone of voice. However, I think observation should be more actively implemented when facing children. During the placement period, I always play and explore with children together. We played all kinds of balls in the snow. We climbed the snow 'hill' and split red color on the top of 'hill'. We played house game and I played as a mother or a wolf. We built some difficult Lego because children need my assistance. Only when I actively involved in children's exploring process and playing activities, where observation can take place, I can understand children's minds and obtain more information for enhancing my knowledges as an ECEC teacher. Especially when I worked in mixed-age group, I can use the opportunity of observation to assist the older children in learning and clearly know the progress of younger children. It is a natural way for ECEC educators to support mixed-age grouping learning.

4.2 Results of Interview and Observation

Why a round-the-clock daycare? I interviewed one child's guardian A and one staff X regarding to the reasons of choosing a round-the-clock daycare center but not a standard daycare center. It is a little sensitive question for a guardian A to answer. I mentioned that you have freedom to say no. However, both the guardian and staff are willing to answer on it. The guardian told me that she is a single mother and a nurse with nonstandard work schedules. When she worked in the evening, at night or on weekends, it is an adaptive strategy to seek a round-the-clock daycare center for her child. She looks a little tired. Yes, it is the truth. In my limited several evening shifts, I accompanied her lovely and 'quiet' child almost every time. I witnessed her child's tears in late night. I even asked her child 'Do you like daycare?' She whispered with tears in eyes 'no!'. As a mother with two daughters, I understood that her true feeling is 'I wanted to stay with my mum together at home during nights and weekends'.

During a routine coffee break, staff X also answered my question. I was informed that parents' employment status is one of main reasons (e.g., parents work as policeman or medical work). Family structure (e.g., nuclear family or single parent family) is another main reason. This staff thought this round-the-clock daycare center is really beneficial to mothers because it can provide child care for mothers to participate in the labor market. During my shifts period, I also found that over half children were not from pure Finnish families, but from immigrant background. In my shifts, I found one child usually stay overnight in daycare. He is a little quiet and not very gregarious. When I smiled at him, he usually turned his head away, even though I have gradually got acquainted with other children. However, on one of my weekend shifts, I suddenly heard a sound of unbridled and harsh crying, because the child's mum came to pick up him. I observed that everyone present was moved by this scene. After he released his suppressed emotions and then initially said to me 'Heippa' with a very sweet smile. At this moment when his mum comes, he has totally 'changed' to another boy.

Can you describe services (including caring and educating) provided in the round-the-clock daycare? I interviewed guardian A & B on this question. The guardian A told me that it is a good choice for her current situation, but possibly it is not the best choice for her child because her child doesn't like staying at the daycare for so long time. But she has no other option as she is a single mum in Finland. She mentioned that her child is talented in painting. However, she had no spare time to send her to join any hobby team. She also hopes that her child can learn more knowledge and skills in daycare and prepare for elementary schooling next year. She felt satisfied that her child has a safe place to stay and be cared when she was working. She then ended the talking with me. I was appreciated for her sharing. The guardian B simply said the service is good, not mentioned too much.

Based on my observation in this daycare, all staffs cared the children very well. They tried their best to establish a home-like environment for these children. The staffs had sensitivity to encounter with the children. The daily operations are aimed at extensive expertise in accordance with FNAE guidelines. However, there are various challenges facing in implementation of holistic pedagogical programs and activities in this daycare, for example, special needs issues, nonstandard hours caring issues etc.

Do you have any comments on mixed-age grouping arranged in the period of non-standard hours care? I interviewed guardian B and staff Y on this question. Guardian B expressed her understanding on the possible economic difficulties of daycare (lack of ECEC staffs) for mixing different ages children into one group during evening and weekend shifts. When I interviewed staff Y and asked what kind of learning material is particularly used in a mixed-age classroom during nonstandard hour care? Staff Y told me that there was no specific material developed for mixed-age grouping learning in a round-the-clock daycare currently. First of all, it is a challenge for staffs to develop relevant materials to meet diverse needs from mixed-age grouping. Secondly, there are no ECEC teachers to work during evening and weekend shifts. However, childcarers will arrange some playing activities for children instead. Usually, both old children and young children sit in a circle, and childcarers read some traditional story books for them. Sometimes, some hand-made painting activities will be arranged as well if children are interested in. But in most of time during evening and weekends, the children freely play together (e.g., pretend play etc.).

Based on my observation, as the number of children who need the nonstandard hours care is always varied, this daycare center does the mixed-age arrangement due to lack of staffs. Hence, mixed-age grouping in this daycare is not an 'intentional' pedagogical arrangement (e.g., Montessori mixed-age classroom) at all, but 'have to' to arranged like this due to non-sufficient staffing possibly. The children age ranged from one-year-old to six-year-old in one group. I noticed that older children usually care for younger ones in outdoor playing. However, the interaction between older children and younger children is not frequently guided. The behavior

and competence of oldest children is too difficult for younger ones to emulate or learn. As the number of children who need nonstandard hours caring is varied every day, so the proportion of older to younger children in one group is out of teachers' control. Because there are no qualified ECEC teachers involved in non-standard hours childcare, it is a tendency of staffs to adopt a structural curriculum and foster instructive interaction in mixed-age grouping.

Do you have enough pleasure time based on your present situation? I interview three guardians. The answers of these three interviewees have no impressive differences, but one single parent with nonstandard working schedules feel the inadequacy of time than others. It seems that lack of time can be described as the typical model of wage-earned families with young children. They are busy between workplace, daycare, supermarkets and home. And even when they stay at home, they cook, clean, wash... There is very little time left for them to accompany with the young children with very retired and stressful status. We always emphasized the time management skills and believe that many parents are capable of handling work-life matters and managing necessary things about their children. However, the result is these mothers feel inadequate time when they are stressful and overwhelmed after they used up so much energy to manage all things.

4.3 Results of Documentary analysis

In current European society, the number of employed mothers is steadily increasing. Besides, there is an increasing workforce works with nonstandard schedules (evening, nights and weekends). Sufficient evidences indicated that working during evenings, nights and weekends is stressful and can affect workers' involvement in family life and responsiveness to children (Bünning & Pollmann-Schult 2016). Obviously, if parents have no sufficient time to look after their children, they have to seek formal child care or non-parent care to reduce the negative impact on children's well-being.

A high quality and formal child care services can prevent children from harmful results of their parents' nonstandard working schedules (evening, night and weekend work). Indeed, providing child care services can benefit greatly from guardians (especially employed mothers who participant in labor market). The high-quality child care services provide the opportunities to develop children's intellectual abilities, personality and social skills. For children from the nuclear or single-parent family, the satisfactory round-the-clock daycare center should be welcome. From the legal perspective, the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that '... shall render appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities and shall ensure the development of institutions, facilities and services for the care of the children' (UN 1989).

What kind of service should there be? It's well noted that public early childhood services are widely available in Finland. The current Finnish educare model have a care function as well as

a pedagogical function. However, it is obvious that children from disadvantaged families are often found in poorer ECEC quality than those well-off children, although there are no detailed consensus figures available in European countries. Young children from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds probably obtain a comparably lower-quality education, unhappier and unhealthier lives and a lower paid future job. From the policy level, it is very good that Finnish educare model does not separate care, education and instruction. However, they should be more flexible to respond to children and their family's needs. Educare service is a range of mixed services, including caring, education, instructions, health, recreational and social related services. The comprehensive services should be provided based on the local needs and be offered to every child.

The way of learning is not directly associated to children's ages, but it is concerned about utilizing different ways of learning between different children. **Mixed-age grouping** is under the assumption of 'the greater the difference among children, the richer the learning environment for the children' (Evangelou 1989). However, simply mixing children of different ages in one group cannot 100% guarantee the benefits to both old and young children. Firstly, separate curricula for ECEC should be prepared for the different forms of ECEC services (FNAE 2018, 28). Secondly, ECEC teachers need to develop learning materials or curriculums to meet varied needs from a mixed-age grouping, because the existing textbooks are not suitable for a mixed-age grouping due to their levels based on ages or grade. Thirdly, a mixed-age grouping should be guided by qualified ECEC teachers and be arranged in a rational and systematic way. ECEC educators should be well prepared for or qualified to support this kind of teaching. Otherwise, it is potentially misuse educare model for early years children. Besides, ECEC teachers need to consider some specific factors if a mixed-age group learning is adopted. For example, what is the best age range within a mixed-grouping? What is the best pro-portion between older and younger children? What is the best curriculum and time duration for mixed-age grouping learning?

The guardians and ECEC professional educators play an important role in the framework of children's life. However, they should not consciously control and shape children's life worlds. ECEC teacher's role is to make efforts honest down as a child's world by working on children's own ideas. ECEC pedagogy needs to integrate care, education and care to influence children's perceptions of their own active learning particularly in nonstandard hours childcare. An American poet wrote, 'Children need a balanced life, to learn something every day, to think every day, to draw and paint and run and dance and play and work every day. When we work with children, we do not only work with a child's cognitive, social or emotional development, we work with the whole child... and it is all there all the time.' If there are no new norms and standards to respond the needs of children, it is really an ambivalent situation in modern life for children. The needs of every child must be protected and cared for, which is a rising expectation and norms regarding to children today.

Early years are considered as a problematic stage of life, while modern family with a growing number of modern family forms, working mums and time pressure have produced threatened and rootless children. Whether the mental status of children will be affected? When children stay at daycare for more hours per day than at home, are children happier and healthier than before? Will it spoil the life of the majority of children and have mainly negative impact on personality development of children? Nowadays, the day care centers support the socialization of the children and take the caring responsibilities of children. Can daycare take the function of family to secure children's pursuing for affection, love, security and stability? This point is crucial because we must realize that in current society children in daycare is facing a complex situation required.

5 Conclusion

The purpose of the thesis was to investigate and develop how to best integrate the educare model in the round-the-clock ECEC in Finland. Based on the research, some recommendations are as follows:

To Finnish authorities

It is necessary to develop a more comprehensive, coherent approach in Finnish early childhood education and care service. The vision of Finnish educare model is to meet a variety of needs including social, cultural, economic for multiple groups. Every child benefiting from the high-quality daycare centers build a good basis for bright future for children. Meeting a variety of needs means the recognition of equal importance of children from disadvantage groups to obtain a high-quality healthy and holistic ECEC service. It is crucial to ensure that all ECEC services (both standard daycare and nonstandard hours childcare) keep consistency in certain key areas. The consistent key areas particularly include qualification requirements of ECEC professions, ECEC pedagogical activities etc.

Finnish ECEC claims that every child has equal access to high quality pedagogical activities regardless of different forms among ECEC services. It must be taken into account in the planning and implementation of pedagogical activities in non-standard hour ECEC (FNAE 2018, 19). It is important for round-the-clock daycare to make high quality curriculum with systematic methodologies based on the FNAE by engaging ECEC service providers, ECEC professions and local municipalities. The qualification requirement of ECEC professions in round-the-clock childcare must keep the same with the requirements in standard daycare centers. With more children from diverse background, ECEC staffs must be capable of one or two foreign languages (e.g., both Finnish and English) for better support children and their families. Even in a Finnish daycare, the Finnish language has been proven inadequate for ECEC personnel.

To ECEC service providers

It is important to make more efforts on engaging the disadvantaged children's families and consider their concrete needs within and across the ECEC organizations. It is important to keep stability of working shifts during caring for the younger children. The children aged 0-3 years old should have the same ECEC personnel and same peer group so that the trust is easier to be built among young children and ECEC personnel. According to the attachment theory, the young children will benefit from the stability of qualified caregivers.

Going to quality children care and education sets the right foundation for children's future personal and educational development (Communication from the commission 2011). ECEC service provider needs to collaborate between diverse institutions to provide useful and meaningful services and support to children and their families (i.e., the opening hours, hobby clubs etc.). The sufficient information about the content of ECEC services in daycare must be provided to the parents to ensure the ECEC activities fully supporting children's development at home. According to the Act on Children's Day Care, the purpose of day care is to support parents in their responsibilities to raise their children and to promote children's personal and balanced development together with their parents.

The Finnish educare model massively relies on the ECEC professions' training and education credentials. ECEC providers must employ sufficient staffs with appropriate higher educational degrees with multiple language skills to better support multiple needs of children. It is not appropriate to mix different ages of children merely for economic reasons. The qualified ECEC educators must be assigned to the mixed-age grouping learning with curriculum developed and teaching strategies implemented when adopting mix-age grouping learning method.

In current rapidly changing society, more and more new challenges require educational reforms. ECEC service provider should focus on early childhood educational process from merely educator's view to the broader views by embracing the children's families. In this research, the parents employed in irregular employment status for long working hours are generally related to low-income families, they have limited access in caring for children. ECEC providers should help these families to broaden their understanding and respect the diversity of children's families. The cross-agency cooperation should be conducted for children and their families, like joint curricular of pre-primary educations, health, hobby schools, housing etc. by addressing the concrete needs of children and families in difficult situations.

To ECEC professions

The key of quality of ECEC service is the qualification of ECEC personnel and the dimensioning in day care centers (ECEC Policy in Finland 2000). **Firstly**, all ECEC teachers must have professional qualifications compliance with the Decree on Professional Qualifications of Social

Welfare Personnel. The qualified ECEC teachers must be present in the shifts of non-standard hours childcare. Other ECEC personnel with care and education duties must have an upper secondary level qualification (Recognition of ECEC qualification n.d.). **Secondly**, in all day care centers, at least every third person operation in care and education assignment must have professional qualifications. ECEC must “Be strong and to Educate the children”. **Thirdly**, the ideology of educare is to integrate education, care and instruction from a natural integrated whole, thus each ECEC profession should closely cooperate to achieve the objectives of Finnish early childhood education and care. In addition, ECEC personnel must master one or two foreign languages except Finnish to support children and their families from diverse backgrounds. **Last but not least**, ECEC staffs must have qualified educational knowledge and mindsets to support in mixed-age grouping learning process.

It is important for ECEC teachers in nonstandard hours childcare to further investigate on implementing mixed-group learning development process to further explore the benefits. **Firstly**, ECEC professions need to develop an informal curriculum or learning materials containing substantial group projects with systematical instructions which provide opportunities for children learning in mixed-age group children if necessary. **Secondly**, with the integration of playing activities and ECEC curriculum, ECEC professions need to develop children’s awareness about the different phenomena about the world. In mixed-age grouping, peer tutoring and cooperative strategies can be utilized in supporting children’s learning from peers. **Thirdly**, it is important to set up a homelike and flexible environment for children to contribute the openness, friendship and freedom to knowledge exchanges. Although the optimum age range and the ratio of older to young children are out of control of ECEC professions, ECEC educators must have the educational knowledge in mixed-age group in allocating the appropriate timing each day and support children in peer tutoring and cooperative learning process. **Fourthly**, ECEC staffs should meet the emotional needs of children like love, caring and encouraging etc., especially for the children from disadvantaged groups. ECEC professions need to observe and listen to children’s feelings, experiences, and ways of thinking and performing. **Lastly but not least**, ECEC professions should cooperate with parents and sufficiently provide the information about contents and characteristics of ECEC services.

To parents

Parents have the responsibilities for upbringing and development of children (UN 1989). The parents with diverse backgrounds should continuously involve in the dialogue with ECEC service providers and access into the meaningful information shared to all. Parents have the right to raise their views and to be heard. Parents have the right to decide the values basis for their children’s care, education and instruction, including language to be spoken with children,

religious, meals and rest. Parents should have the consideration on children's individual development plan and cooperate with ECEC educators for children's learning and development.

Parents should understand children's learning environment multidimensionally, for example, the environment of the mixed-age grouping etc. Parents should have basic knowledge about attachment theory as well. Parents also should have sensitive to children's signal for their attention if they are apart all long day. Parents should have the awareness that separating a young child from a primary attachment figure may cause long-term emotional trauma. Working parents should have some time to accompany and play with their children during the spare time. It is parents' responsibility to love and keep eyes on children's life and learning.

6 Evaluation

Basically, the objectives of thesis have been achieved. I theoretically reviewed Finnish educare model, FNAE 2018, various ECEC setting to meet local diverse needs, attachment theory as well as the pedagogical requirements of mixed-age grouping. In order to obtain sufficient data, I interviewed guardians and ECEC personnel, actively involved in children's exploration to observe the life of children. In addition, I made documentary analysis to collect practical and theoretical information for efficiency. Based on the research and analysis, I dig out the potential improvement areas and make meaningful recommendations.

In research process, I met quite a few challenges. For example, in interview step, it is quite time-consuming. The questions preparation is not easy as some questions are a little sensitive and it is not easy to go further on the topics. However, I still got the basic facts because the interview results can be verified by the observation by myself. During my research period, I also obtained the friendship from children and praise from staffs. Due to the language barriers (most of staffs don't speak English), I did not get much written comments from director and staffs. However, the director sent a message to me 'everyone here likes you a lot ...' when I finalized the research and placement period from this round-the-clock daycare.

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